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YMCA Tennis, Anyone?

by Dave Eitland, YMCA Director of Development and Marketing

“10-S N-E-1?” was a popular bumper sticker during the ‘70s tennis boom. That boom is back in tennis at the Grand Traverse Bay YMCA, but perhaps the new slogan should read “10-S F-R-E-1?” because the YMCA has a tennis program available for “everyone”.

Just ask 90 year old Wally Bruder, who plays three times a week as part of the YMCA’s “contract time” option. Or ask 10 year old triplets Faith, Hope, and Grace Kurtz, who take group lessons Saturday mornings. Ask Barb Polzin, USTA Adult League player and an admitted tennis-addict, or ask any of the 80 girls who played YMCA Junior High League tennis, for many their first experience with tennis. Ask the players on the tennis teams from St. Francis, West, Central, or TC Christian, or ask Joyce Weise, whose knee operation hasn’t keep her off the courts. Ask Paul and Barb Bandrowski. They can be found at the Y courts most any day with their five kids who all play tennis alongside them, including the youngest, internationally ranked 9 year old sensation, Elliott.

They’ll all tell you the same thing – “YMCA tennis is a great way to learn the game, get a great workout, or just have a lot of fun!”

One of the reasons for the success of the YMCA tennis program is that commitment to excellence goes hand in hand with commitment to mission. Tennis pros Tom, Joseph, and James Van Deinse and Andy Caldwell have all played international satellite level tour qualifiers, and as past winner of the Northern Michigan Tennis Association Sportsmanship Award, Coach Joseph tells the parents of his students, “Not every kid will grow up to be a top ranked player, but every kid can learn to have fun, and every kid can be taught the YMCA values of honesty, respect, caring and responsibility. We do that in our tennis program just like we do in each of our programs.”

Kevin and Jennifer Shoults agree. Kevin owns and operates Seung-Ni Martial Arts Academy, and his family can be found at the YMCA tennis courts three to five times each week. “We really like their values-based approach,” says Kevin. Adds Jennifer, “And the boys [9 year old C.J. and 6 year old Mace] have turned into top level tournament players thanks to the expert instruction they receive at the YMCA.”

Jim and Janet “Jandy” Cooley praise the YMCA’s family focus, as well. Daughter, Paige, is a top 50 ranked junior tennis player, and Jandy plays adult league tennis. She boasts, “Paige started when she was three, and it’s just so inspiring to see so many tots, so many families, so many senior players, competitive league players, tournament players, and recreational players – all find a home at the Y. YMCA tennis really is for everyone!”

“Nearly 40% of our current YMCA membership is related to tennis,” explains YMCA board chair, Nick Edson. “Y Tennis is our biggest and most cost-effective program.”

“Whether it is individual or group lessons, indoor or outdoor, 3 year olds or 90 year olds, for fun or ranked competition, contract time or free time to members, Y Tennis provides the means for people of all ages to play and be fit,” says Tom Van Deinse, YMCA CEO. “It’s like our vision statement says ... we build strong kids, strong families, strong communities. Y Tennis does that for people.”

For more information about Y Tennis or other YMCA programs, log on to www.gtbayymca.org, or contact the Front Desk at our main Y facility at 933-9622 or info@gtbayymca.org.